



NEWSLETTER

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY



WORLD WAR II HEROES CONTINUE TO BE RECOGNIZED

Geri Opsal, Tribal Veterans Service Officer for Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate, Dale Reber, Gregory County VSO, and Tom Sparrow, Turner County VSO, have been busy in the communities recognizing our World War II heroes.



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VETERAN MEDICAL ID BRACELET OR DOGTAG

Veterans with chronic medical conditions are eligible for a medical ID bracelet or dog tag. The personalized ID is customized for each veteran.

To obtain a medical ID, veterans must be approved by a clinician – physician, nurse practitioner, physician assistant, diabetes educator, case manager or any other health care professional within the VA. Clinicians must submit a consult to Prosthetics, and the IDs are usually shipped directly to veterans.

Common medical conditions for which a medical ID is indicated include diabetes, heart conditions, food or drug allergies, PTSD, dementia, embedded metal fragments, or rare diseases.

Medical IDs may be useful and could be lifesaving for many veterans with a variety of health issues. These IDs are very visible when worn around the neck or wrist and are likely to be seen by emergency providers. Click here to learn more about claiming the benefit <https://www.americanmedical-id.com/free-veterans-medical-ids>.

NEW MEDICARE CARDS

Starting April 2018, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) will begin mailing new Medicare cards to all people with Medicare.

Instead of a Social Security Number, the new card will have a Medicare Number that's unique to each person with Medicare. The new card will help protect identities and keep personal information more secure. Medicare coverage and benefits will stay the same.

Medicare will automatically mail new cards at no cost to the address on file at Social Security. So making sure the address of anyone you're helping is up-to-date is important. An address can be updated easily by signing in to or creating a [my Social Security account](#).

As consumers begin to receive cards, share these three important tips with them:

1. Destroy old Medicare card right away.
2. Use new card. Doctors, other health care providers, and plans approved by Medicare know that Medicare is replacing the old cards. They are ready to accept new card.
3. Beware of people contacting you about your new Medicare card and asking you for your Medicare Number, personal information, or to pay a fee for your new card. Treat your Medicare Number like you treat your Social Security or credit card numbers. Remember, Medicare will never contact you uninvited to ask for your personal information.

For more information about the new Medicare card, visit go.medicare.gov/newcard. You can also visit Medicare.gov for [tips to prevent Medicare fraud](#).



CONCIERGE FOR CARE PROGRAM

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced the launch of Concierge for Care, a health-care enrollment initiative that connects with former service members shortly after they separate from the service.

“Our goal is to give transitioning service members one less thing to worry about,” said VA Secretary David J. Shulkin. “We know that more than a third of veterans who haven’t yet visited our facilities indicated they are not aware of VA health care benefits, while a quarter reported they do not know how to apply.”

As part of Concierge for Care, VA staff members are personally contacting recently separated service members to answer questions, process their health-care enrollment applications over the phone and help schedule eligible veterans’ first VA medical appointment, if needed.

Each week, the VA receives a list of separating service members from the Department of Defense. The goal is to make contact with them within a month of discharge.

Certain veterans who served in a theater of combat operations are eligible to enroll and receive cost-free health care for medical conditions related to their military service during the five-year period after discharge.

Information about VA health care and the application process can be found at <https://www.vets.gov/health-care/apply/>.

ZIMMERMAN ATTENDS NASDVA

This week SDDVA Secretary Larry Zimmerman attended the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs conference in DC.

Presentations included updates on VA modernization, USA Vietnam War Commemoration, eDD-214, National Veterans Museum, World War I Centennial, Appeals modernization, suicide prevention and awareness, Institute for Veterans and Military Families survey, soldier for life, veterans employment and training service, and Gold Star Families memorial.

In addition, presentations were made by NASDVA Committees, Veterans Experience Office, Veterans Benefit Administration, Veterans Health Administration, National Cemetery Administration, and USDVA Secretary Dr. David Shulkin.

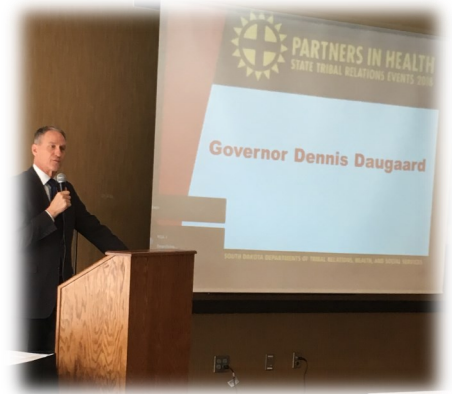


TRIBAL RELATIONS DAY

Wednesday was Tribal Relations Day at the Capitol. This year's theme was "Partners in Health." Partners for their presentation sessions were the South Dakota Department of Health and the South Dakota Department of Social Services. Remarks were given by Governor Dugaard, Tribal Leaders and Constitutional Officers.

Briefing sessions were held Tuesday at the RedRossa Italian Grille in Pierre. Topics included public health data, chronic disease prevention, suicide prevention, telehealth implementation, infant mortality, behavioral health services, and meth and opioid abuse prevention.

SDDVA's Erin Bultje had a booth at the two-day event promoting veterans benefits and South Dakota Joining Forces. SDDVA Deputy Secretary Pollard and Program Manager Erin Brown attended the Tribal Relations Rotunda Ceremony.



PHILLIPS JOINS SDDVA TEAM

Shannon Phillips is the newest member to join the SDDVA team. Phillips will serve in the Claims Office as a State Veterans Service Officer team. .

Shannon joined active duty Army in 2003 as a Nuclear Biological Chemical Specialist. She landed in Fort Campbell, KY after basic training and AIT, and within 24 hours was on a plane to Kuwait. Her second tour took her to Iraq. After her discharge from active duty, Shannon joined a local Army Chemical Reserve unit.

Shannon has a Bachelor's Degree in Health Sciences and a Master's Degree in Healthcare Administration. She looks forward to the rewards and learning from challenges in this position as it is an honor to serve veterans as she has been served as a veteran.

Shannon and her family enjoy doing anything outdoors. In the winter months you will find them playing games, doing art projects and watching a lot of Netflix.

Welcome to the SDDVA team Shannon!



VA TO INCREASE ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Cohen Veterans Network, Inc., (CVN) announced a new partnership to increase veterans' access to mental health resources to reduce veteran suicides. The partnership will allow the VA and CVN to work together to advance and improve veterans' mental health and well-being and expand and promote community collaboration to increase veterans' access to mental health resources.

"The VA and CVN have a shared goal to improve veterans' health and access to mental health services to reduce veteran suicide," said VA Secretary David J. Shulkin. "With 14 out of the 20 veterans who take their own lives per day not engaging the VA care, partnerships such as this help those veterans, as well as their families, receive care where they live."

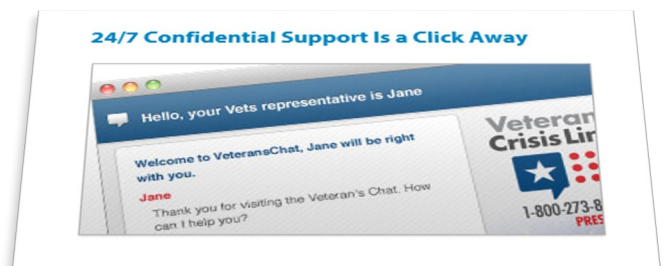
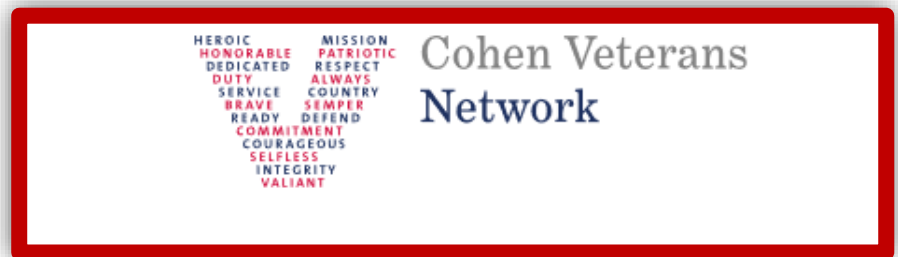
As part of the collaboration, the VA and CVN will: work together on potential mental health education initiatives, consumer marketing and public health messaging

- Discuss potential locations for Cohen Clinics in regions believed to have underserved veterans in need of mental health care services
- Collaborate to share publicly available, VA-developed educational resources for health care providers, such as military culture training and suicide prevention training with CVN staff and clinic employees.

"This partnership will help us save lives by getting care to veterans faster and, therefore, preventing suicides," said Dr. Anthony Hassan, president and CEO of CVN. "We are excited about partnering with the VA and advancing the field through innovative clinician training initiatives and public messaging. This partnership adds another layer of depth and quality to our robust network of Cohen Military Family Clinics."

For more information about the VA mental health services, visit www.mentalhealth.va.gov. Information about the Cohen Veterans Network may be found at: <https://www.cohenveteransnetwork.org>.

Veterans in crisis or having thoughts of suicide — and those who know a veteran in crisis — should call the Veterans Crisis Line for confidential support 24 hours a day and 365 days a year. Call 800-273-8255 and press 1, chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat, or text to 838255.



OPERATION BLACK HILLS CABIN

Operation Black Hills Cabin board of directors met last week in Custer in preparation for the upcoming season.

This board, their staff, their volunteers, and their partners continue to provide a peaceful respite for combat-injured veterans to relax and rehabilitate.

Board members include (standing left to right: Larry Zimmerman, Martin Mahrt, and Jeff Baird) (seated left to right: Patricia Baird and Lone Fejfar).

Interested veterans can make application at:
<http://www.operationblackhillscabin.org/application.html>.



VIETNAM VETERANS WEEKEND DEEMED SUCCESSFUL

This past weekend, Vietnam Veterans and their families had the opportunity to gather in Mitchell for a reunion. Community leaders in Mitchell provided numerous educational opportunities for the veterans, as well as entertainment and socializing.

Davison County Veterans Service Office team assisted with the weekend and were there as a vendor on Saturday, along with SDDVA Field Officer Mike Maske.

The key note speaker on Saturday afternoon focused on Agent Orange and all the potential medical issues. Congresswoman Kristi Noem was the keynote speaker at the banquet and encouraged veterans to "write down their stories."

Kudos to the Mitchell community for coordinating and sponsoring such a great event.

UPCOMING EVENTS

2018

Mar 4-8—National VFW Conference—Washington, DC
Mar 6—SFVAHCS Town Hall—Sioux Falls VA Auditorium—5:00 pm (CT)
Mar 9—VABHHCS VSO Congressional Forum—VFW Post 1273—Rapid City—10:00 am (MT)
Mar 13—VABHHCS Veteran Town Hall and Outreach—Newcastle Senior Center—8:00 am (MT)
Mar 13—VABHHCS Veteran Town Hall and Outreach—Sundance Senior Center—1:00 pm (MT)
Mar 22—Veterans Legal Services—Watertown National Guard Armory—9:00 am—3:00 pm (CT)
Mar 23—Veterans Legal Services—Sioux Falls DAV—9:00 am—3:00 pm (CT)
Apr 18—Veterans Council Meeting—PVA Headquarters—Sioux Falls—10:00 am (CT)
Apr 27-29—DAV State Convention—The Lodge—Deadwood
May 11—AHEC Improving Veterans Care Conference—University Center—Sioux Falls
Jun 7-10—American Legion State Convention—Spearfish
Jun 14-17—VFW State Convention—Sioux Falls
Jul 12—Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate Cemetery Grand Opening—Sisseton—11:00 am (CT)
Jul 14-17—DAV National Convention—Reno, NV
Jul 21-25—VFW National Convention—Kansas City, MO
Jul 26—VABHHCS Veterans Town Hall—Post 8 American Legion—Pierre
Aug 20-24—SDDVA Benefits School—Ramkota—Pierre
Aug 24-30—American Legion National Convention—Minneapolis, MN
Oct 10—SD Veterans Commission Meeting—Soldiers and Sailors Building—Pierre—8:00 am (CT)



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